Province Takes Action to Control the Spread of COVID-19 in the North

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Following consultation with the Mayor of La Loche and other northern leaders, Saskatchewan's Chief Medical Health Officer Dr. Shahab today signed a Public Health Order restricting all non-critical travel into northern Saskatchewan, specifically the Northern Saskatchewan Administration District (see map attached). Dr. Shahab is also issuing a strong recommendation against non-essential travel between communities within northern Saskatchewan.

This action is being taken in addition to a number of other actions the government has taken to address the outbreak in La Loche and protect northern residents.

Premier Scott Moe said there are unique challenges when an outbreak occurs in a remote northern community.

"Our government has already taken significant action to respond to the situation in La Loche and we are taking further action today," Moe said. "I have spoken with La Loche Mayor Robert St. Pierre and several other people in the community and we will continue to work closely with northern leaders to protect the north."

Checkpoints have been established by northern leadership along all highways leading into northern Saskatchewan. Today's order provides the full legal authority to enforce travel restrictions into the north.

Staffing of the checkpoints will continue to be directed by northern leadership The provincial government has offered fire suppression staff to support the checkpoints and to provide any other support required.

Moe said the requirement to self-isolate may also be a challenge for some residents.

"Social housing units are already being provided for individuals who need to self-isolate," Moe said. "I have directed that the school in La Loche also be made available for this purpose and that the Public Safety Agency

provide mobile housing units – work-camp trailers – for individuals who need to self-isolate."

Actions taken to date include:

- An outbreak was declared at La Loche Health Centre LTC, which immediately initiated strengthened protections and protocols around infection control like limiting resident movement, additional precautions around use of PPE and enhanced daily cleaning schedules;
- A new portable GeneXpert testing unit has been provided for use in La Loche, which will result in significantly expanded testing capacity and shorter turnaround time;
- The Saskatchewan Health Authority has provided additional personal protective equipment (PPE) to the La Loche Health Centre and the province is actively working with the federal government to obtain additional PPE;
- On April 18, regional medical health officers advised against all non-essential travel between northwest Saskatchewan and northern Alberta;
- Regular COVID updates and information are being provided on radio across the North in four languages - English, Cree, Dene and Michif;
- Two Emergency Services Officers from the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency have been deployed to the community; and
- The Public Safety Agency is providing assistance with emergency planning including training local emergency officers.

"As I noted yesterday, even though Saskatchewan has successfully reduced the spread of COVID-19, unfortunately we can expect to experience isolated outbreaks," Moe said. "Our health system and our government is prepared to take immediate action to respond to these outbreaks and that's what we are doing today in the north."

Public inquiries regarding the restriction of all non-critical travel into and out of Northern Saskatchewan Administration District (NSAD) can be directed to the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency toll-free line at 1-855-559-5502.

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